

Text: 1 Cor 12:1-11

Theme: Spiritual Gifts

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Epistle lesson of Saint Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, the twelfth chapter verses one through eleven.

Good Morning, gentlemen and ladies, how are you doing today? I pray that you are doing well. There is an ancient fable describes how the animals of the forest organized a school. The curriculum included running, climbing, swimming, and flying. Each student had to become proficient in all subjects so each could boast that he was able to do everything. The duck passed flying and swimming, but was poor in running. The rabbit was top of the class in running, but nearly drowned in swimming. The eagle took top honors in flying, but could only hop, not run. The raccoon climbed well, but fell on his face when he tried to fly. Finally, all the animals realized that each had their own unique talents, and that the whole forest was better off if each used and excelled at his own gifts. In our Epistle reading for today, the Apostle Paul had to teach the Corinthian Christians the same lesson when it came to their spiritual giftedness. What are spiritual gifts? Where do spiritual gifts come from? How are they the same and yet different? Ponder these questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

I. What are Spiritual gifts? Similar and different.

First it should be noted, that what are spiritual gifts? They are gifts given by the Holy Spirit, alongside the gift of saving faith, for the support, encouragement, and sustaining of the

Church. As Saint Paul writes, there are a variety of spiritual gifts, everything from speaking in foreign languages to translation and prophecy. They are many and various, each given uniquely to the individual. Some of them are unique to the Early Church and some continue even today. It is a part of what makes each of us unique and different.

How much do we like to focus on our differences! A lot of times we focus not on what makes us the same but what makes us different. Sometimes the differences are minor, such as our race, height, gender, or even eye color. Sometimes they are larger, such as the missing of limbs, sight, or hearing. That is what was happening to the church in Corinth. They were focusing on their differences, to the point of falling into the sin of pride. They were using their different gifts to elevate themselves over others. They viewed those around them as lesser because they did not have the gift of speaking in tongues or miraculous healing, or another such gift. There are some today that still do this, saying you need to speak in tongues in order to really be a true Christian. The Corinthians failed to see how their varied giftedness was empowered by the same Holy Spirit and thus was no basis for pride.

Like the Corinthians, we too have a variety of gifts. Some people are good at working with their hands, visualizing a space in their minds, and then constructing things to fit that space. Others are better at public speaking, reading, explaining hard to understand concepts, teaching, music, or many other different abilities. The temptation is there to do the same as the church in Corinth and look down on others, simply because they do not have the gifts that we do, to pridefully elevate ourselves above others simply because they do not have the same gifts that we do. Our sinful nature loves to do that, taking even minor

differences and using them to bolster ourselves and our own accomplishments. In reality, the differences among spiritual gifts can be compared to the differences between coffee. Send a child to the store for “coffee” and you may be asking for confusion. There is regular, decaf, and “lite” coffee; ground, drip, instant, and freeze-dried coffee; Capuchin, Suisse mocha, Belgian hazelnut, and many other kinds. They are different, but all of them are coffee. They may taste different, but all are coffee.

II. Christians are the same in their status and standing before God. (vv. 2–3)

The same is true of us as Christians. We are different, yet all of us are sinners, led astray by the temptations of Satan and the weakness of our sinful flesh. All of us are in need of a savior. We need the forgiveness of our sins and the redemption of our souls, something that we cannot do by our own power, no matter how much we may try.

Thanks be to God for all that He has done for us through Christ Jesus. Through His grace and mercy, He has sent His Son to be our Savior, that by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, all of our sins are forgiven, taken into His holy flesh on the cross and paid for by the shedding of His blood. In grace and mercy, through the waters of Holy Baptism, He gives to us of His Holy Spirit that creates saving faith in us. As we confess in the Creed, “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts.” Through the Holy Spirit working in us, we say not, Jesus is accursed, but Jesus is Lord. That He has indeed granted us a variety of gifts, for us to use not to exalt ourselves over others, but to use together in the spread of the

Gospel. He enables us to use our gifts in service to our neighbor and the Church at large. Remember, Saint Paul is writing to the whole church, not to build up a specific person, but to build up the church as a whole.

III. The diversity of gifts is all for the sake of the unity of Christ's church.

We use the distinctive gifts bestowed upon us to serve and edify others. If someone is having trouble understanding a complex topic, those who are able to help explain it do so. If someone is in need of gas or food, those who are excellent cooks help them out. If someone is in need of shoveling or handywork, those who are physically able to help them, do so. We make them best use of our gifts, using them in service towards our neighbor as they have need. The different talents and abilities we have as Christians testify to the rich grace of our Lord. In love He has endowed each one of us with unique gifts to use for the good of the body of Christ. We confess Jesus as Lord by using our Spirit-given gifts to glorify him.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.